



HOLY THURSDAY (YEAR A) • 9 APRIL 2020

Holy Week @ Home

FOR FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN



This liturgy is written for preschool and primary school-aged children but can be adjusted to accommodate older siblings. It is designed to create a space for prayer as a family, and to teach your children about the Last Supper, when Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and instituted the Holy Eucharist.

You will need:

- a suitable space in your house for the liturgy (such as a lounge room or rumpus room), preferably with a 'prayer table' as a focus point
- a Bible
- a bowl or bucket of warm water and a towel
- 'Passover' foods for a special family meal (optional, see below)
- music (see suggestions below, or choose something your family is already familiar with)
- a laptop, tablet or smartphone, to play suggested music and clips.

ABOUT TODAY

Today we celebrate Holy Thursday. It is a significant day in the church's calendar because it is when Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist and shared his last meal with his apostles. It also marks the end of Lent.

PREPARE

If you decide to incorporate a special family meal in this liturgy, you might like to prepare some traditional Passover foods as part of your menu, such as unleavened bread, bitter herbs, lamb, apple sauce (in place of haroset, the sweet fruit and nut paste that symbolises the mortar used by the Hebrew slaves in Egypt), red wine or grape juice.

Fill a bowl or bucket with warm water (at a comfortable temperature) and place it in your prayer space along with a towel.

Get comfortable: pull out cushions or settle in comfortable chairs, turn off mobile phones and focus your attention on the prayer table. Explain that you will be spending some time with Jesus and remembering his story.

GETTING STARTED

Quickly recap your Palm Sunday liturgy and explain that today you will be celebrating Holy Thursday together. Say an opening prayer such as:

Dear Jesus,

Thank you for gathering us together. We praise you and honour you.

We ask you to be with us as we journey with you and as we remember your last few days on this earth. Please open our eyes, our ears and our hearts to receive your word.

Amen.

GOSPEL

- Explain to your children that you will now be watching a [short animation](#) that explains why we celebrate Holy Thursday. If you don't have access to the internet or would prefer to read from the Bible, go to [John 13:1-15](#) and proclaim the gospel to your family!
- You may wish to ask your children to recap what happened in the passage and help them summarise the story.

REFLECT

Encourage your children to reflect on what they have learnt. Some good questions and prompts for discussion with small children are:

- What happened in the story of Holy Thursday?
- What did you find interesting?
- I wonder how the disciples were feeling ...
- What do we learn about Jesus from this story?
- I wonder how we can serve people in our lives ...

For older children:

- Why do you think Peter didn't want Jesus to wash his feet?
- I wonder how Jesus was feeling knowing he was about to be betrayed by one of his apostles ...

RESPOND

Wash each other's feet

Follow Jesus' example by washing each other's feet. You could make this part of your annual Holy Thursday family tradition. While you are washing your children's feet—they can wash yours too if they wish too—explain the significance of this action: that Jesus came to serve, and as his disciples, we too need to serve others.

Share a meal (optional)

You may also like to share a meal with your family at the dinner table. Before eating, read out the account of the Last Supper in Luke 22:14-23. Explain that your meal is similar to the meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. You could explain that every time we go to Mass, we remember the Last Supper, and that when the priest repeats Jesus' words, the bread and wine truly become the body and blood of Jesus.

Summarise

Briefly summarise the central messages of your discussion and reflection (keep it simple). You might like to leave a small towel or piece of bread on your prayer table as a reminder of today's liturgy.

Sing

Sing a song or hymn together, such as '[Jesus Loves Me](#)', '[This Little Light of Mine](#)' or '[The EUCHARIST song](#)'.

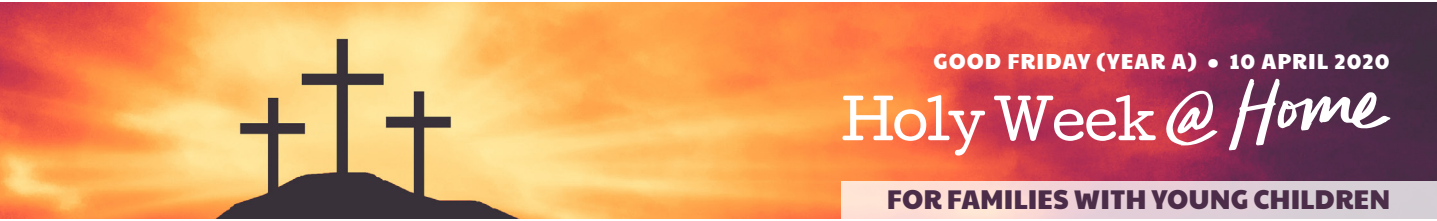
Pray

Conclude by saying a prayer such as:

Dear Jesus, thank you for the time that we have had together, learning more about you. We pray that we can be humble like you and ask that you bless our family and the day/night to come.

(Ask your children if there is anything in particular they wish to pray for at this time and possibly end with a Hail Mary or Our Father).

Amen.



This liturgy is written for preschool and primary school-aged children but can be adjusted to accommodate older siblings. It is designed to create a space for prayer as a family, and to teach your children about the passion and crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

You will need:

- a suitable space in your house for the liturgy (such as a lounge room or rumpus room), preferably with a 'prayer table' as a focus point
- a cross or crucifix
- music (see suggestions below, or choose something your family is already familiar with)
- [printouts](#) of the Stations of the Cross (alternatively, you can use 'digital' stations—see below)
- children's backpacks filled with books
- coloured pencils, markers and/or crayons, and paper
- a laptop, tablet or smartphone, to play suggested music and/or to participate in a [digital Stations of the Cross](#).

ABOUT TODAY

Today we celebrate Good Friday, one of the most significant and solemn days in the church calendar. We remember God's amazing love for us shown through Jesus' willingness to suffer and die on the cross so that we can be part of God's family. Traditionally on Good Friday, we walk and pray the Stations of the Cross, an old ritual of the Catholic Church that retraces Jesus' last moments before his death.

PREPARE

If you decide to participate in a traditional Stations of the Cross, you will need to print out the stations and distribute them around your house.

Gather your family in your prayer space and get comfortable; place your cross or crucifix in the centre of your prayer table and turn off your mobile phones. Explain that you will be spending some time with Jesus and remembering his story.

GETTING STARTED

Recap your Holy Thursday liturgy and explain that today you will be remembering Jesus' passion and death together by praying the Stations of the Cross. Say an opening prayer such as:

*Dear Jesus,
Today we gather to remember your suffering and death.
Help us never to forget the amazing sacrifice you made for us. We love you Lord.
Amen.*

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Show your children the cross or crucifix and explain that the journey you are about to take will end with Jesus on the cross, but that the story does not end there!

- This [digital version](#) of the stations features images and brief descriptions and prayers. You will need to click through the presentation to move to the next station.
- Alternatively, you may wish to do a more [traditional version](#) of the stations. Begin at the first station and work your way through them. Ensure your cross or crucifix remains with you as you process. On arriving at each station, you may wish to genuflect (bow) and say the traditional prayer:

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you.

Response: For by your Holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Ask your children what they see happening in each picture, or you can describe it to them. Some questions to ask may be:

- What can you see happening?
- Who are the people you can see in the picture?
- I wonder how the people in this picture must be feeling ...

Conclude each station by praying:

Jesus, we thank you for all you have endured for us. We love you.

As you walk, sing a verse of a hymn or chant such as '[Jesus, remember me](#)' (Taizé). Take turns carrying the cross or crucifix.

You could also ask each of your children to fill a backpack with books to make it heavy. As you process, ask your children to carry their backpacks to symbolise walking with Christ on his journey. You could discuss the discomfort and pain he must have felt as he made his way to Calvary and how their heavy packs are insignificant compared to the burden he carried for us.

REFLECT

At the end, discuss the experience with your children. Some questions and prompts for reflection might include:

- What station do you remember the most and why?
- How did looking at the stations make you feel?
- I wonder how Jesus would have felt during his journey to the cross ...

RESPOND

If your children are still engaged, you might like to do a drawing or colouring activity that draws on their experience of the stations:

- Those who walked the traditional version of the stations may choose to colour them in and place them on the prayer table with the cross or crucifix.
- Those who participated in the digital version of the stations may like to draw their own picture of one of the stations and place it on the prayer table.

Returning to your prayer space, briefly summarise the central messages of your discussion and reflection (keep it simple).

Conclude by singing a hymn ('[At the foot of the cross](#)' or '[Above all](#)' for instance), or by saying a prayer such as:

*Dear Jesus,
Thank you for the time we have had together and for your sacrifice, which has given us life. When we are feeling sad or hurt, we remember that you were sad and hurt too, and that you love us and will always take care of us.*

(Encourage your children to offer their personal intentions and possibly conclude with a Hail Mary or Our Father.)

Amen.

Holy Week @ Home

FOR FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

This liturgy is written for preschool and primary school-aged children but can be adjusted to accommodate older siblings. It is designed to create a space for prayer as a family, and to teach your children about Jesus' triumph over death.

You will need:

- a suitable space in your house, preferably with a 'prayer table' as a focus point
- all the symbols you have gathered this week: a cross or crucifix; a towel and/or bread; a branch
- a Bible
- a candle
- additional pillar candles for decorating (one per child), permanent markers, ribbons, stickers, rhinestones, craft glue and anything else that might be suitable for decorating candles
- poster paper and coloured markers, pencils or crayons (for those not decorating candles)
- music (see suggestions below, or choose something your family is already familiar with)
- a laptop, tablet or smartphone, to play suggested music and clips.

ABOUT TODAY

Today we celebrate Easter Sunday. Traditionally, Easter Sunday features lots of symbols of new life—eggs, flowers, baby rabbits and lambs, dawn light—because we celebrate today the wonderful discovery that, though he was dead, Jesus is very much alive, and brings new life to us too.

PREPARE

Gather your family in your prayer space and get comfortable. Turn off your mobile phones. Close the blinds and turn off the lights, making the space as dark as possible while remaining safe. Place the symbols from your prayer table on the ground.

GETTING STARTED

Begin by singing a hymn or song together, such as '[Alleluia, he is risen](#)', '[Jesus Christ is risen Today](#)' or '[Because he lives](#)'.

Talk about how you have been following Jesus' journey from his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem to his death on the cross and burial in the tomb. Explain, though, that the story doesn't end there. In fact, it has the best happy ending ever: Jesus is alive!

Say an opening prayer such as:

Dear Jesus,

Thank you for gathering us here today, and for your sacrifice on the cross; may we never forget how much you love us. Be with us now as we learn about how you defeated death and opened up the gates of heaven for us, so that we can live with you forever.

Amen.

GOSPEL

Watch [this animation](#) together. It portrays the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.

To reinforce the story in your children's minds (or if you don't have access to the internet), you can also read the story of Jesus' resurrection in [Matthew 28:1-10](#).

REFLECT

Ask your children:

- What did you just see in the video (or hear in the gospel story)?
- What happened to Jesus?
- Who was the man in the tomb?
- I wonder how the women who went to visit Jesus felt when they didn't see him there ...

Point out the parts of the story that show that Jesus was no longer in the tomb because he is alive!

As you gather in the darkened room, explain that the inside of the tomb would have been dark, and that Jesus' followers would have felt that they were in darkness too because their leader had just died. But now we know that Jesus has in fact risen and is alive.

To symbolise this, ask one of your children to light a candle—if they are too young, an adult should do it. Observe what happens to the room once the candle is lit. The darkness disappears and you can see clearly what is around you. This is what happened once Jesus' disciples realised that he was alive. Their darkness disappeared and they were able to see more clearly everything that Jesus had explained to them when he was with them.

RESPOND

- Open your blinds and/or turn on your lights.
- Using the pillar candles and craft materials you have collected, help your children to decorate candles to serve as a reminder of Jesus' resurrection. The candles can either remain on your prayer table or be placed in your kids' rooms and lit during prayer time.
- If you don't have candles or appropriate craft materials, or decorating candles seems a bit overwhelming, you can make an Easter poster or banner instead to hang up in your house. You could use the phrases, 'Happy Easter!', 'He is Risen, Alleluia!' or anything you feel is fitting.
- While you work on your candles (or banner or poster), reflect with your children on the journey you have taken together through Holy Week. Comparing how Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday with his reception on Good Friday, ask your kids how they welcome Jesus into their own lives. Let your kids take the lead with this discussion. Explain to your children that they can talk to Jesus anytime they wish as he is alive today!
- Returning to your prayer space, conclude by singing a hymn ('[What a beautiful name](#)' or '[I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy](#)' for instance), or by saying a prayer such as:

Dear Jesus,

Thank you for this time together, learning more about you. Today, we rejoice in your resurrection and are happy that you are alive! We praise You and glorify You! Bless our family and friends on this special day.

(Offer personal intentions and possibly conclude with a Hail Mary, an Our Father or a Glory Be.)

Alleluia! Alleluia! Amen.